Rec. J. May - July - 1851

Leicester (Mass^tts^) July 15. 1851.

Dear Miss Carpenter,

I have to acknowledge your kind and most welcome letter of May 29th, enclosing a note from Mr. & Miss Estlin, which I recd. the 12th of June. I have, since that, heard from Mr. Estlin of the various efforts among a few of ~~the Abolitionists~~ our English friends to obtain a clear & distinct word of remonstrance from British Unit^ns^ against our new Fugitive Slave Law, and the support which ~~our~~ the leading American Unitarian ministers & laymen are giving to it. For a time, I was quite discouraged, & supposed that the Unitarians ~~body~~ (with you) would be speechless. But the holding of the Meeting in London appears to have been very successful, and is most encouraging; still, that was not a meeting of any known Unitarian Association, and cannot be referred to here as the expression of the Unitarian body of England; and while Mr. Madge, & Mr. Tagart, and such men, are the chosen representatives of that body, I fear we shall never have such an expression. The B. & F. U. A. seems to have caught the very time-serving spirit which has long governed our Amn. Unitn. Assocn. Years ago, Dr. Parkman declared to me, and others, that "no Resolution, or action of any kind, about Slavery, should ever go forth from the Amn. Unitarian Assocn." None ever has. He has carried his point, & made good his word, & the Unitn. Assocn. is a lifeless, soulleſs thing — having but a name to live. On every point of true and vital religion, it is absolutely without the shadow of influence. And all, who go in its footsteps, will share its fate. I may seem to have *aſsumed* the dead character of the Am. U. A. — but, I ask, where is the evidence of its life, its light, & its power? What men does it send forth — what publications — which are arousing, and quickening, the men of this nation to repentance, and bringing them to the service of God? Their whole operations are cold, formal, technical. — But I did not propose to write to you about our Unitn. movements here. — I wished chiefly to thank you for your encouraging & earnest words about our cause, especially in view of the Fugitive Bill. The main part of it (as you are perhaps aware by this time) I had inserted in the Liberator (of July 4.); the great preſsure of A.S. Matter, in Mr. G.'s hands, occasioning some little delay. — I feel, and cannot but expreſs to you (in frankneſs), my deep regret at the course which your brother Ruſsell is taking. Far as it is from his thought & intention, his labours on this point, so far as known here, are regarded both by anti-slavery & pro-slavery men, as hostile to the opponents of Slavery, and on the side of its supporters; — I speak of their practical influence and effect here. The Unitarian papers would copy them, I doubt not, readily; — as I do not regularly see those papers, I cannot positively say they have done so. On the other hand, the Christian Inquirer (New York) refused to insert the Extracts from your brother Philip's Lecture on Popery, which was an eloquent, direct, & positive testimony against the American Abomination of Desolation. — I sent that extract to the Inquirer, in preference to either of the Anti Slavery journals, because

I thought ~~they would~~ they *ought* to publish it, and, considering its authorship, I thought they would. In a letter to Mr. Estlin, which will go by same ship with this, I have ~~explained~~ spoken more fully of the reasons given by Mr. Bellows, why the article was rejected by Mr. Osgood, who has control of the paper. — The piece has gone to the "Standard" now, where it will doubtless appear. — The difficulty with your brother Russell (if I may express what appears to me) is that his judgment is warped, on this question, by his *sectarianism*. His deep devotion to Unitarian truths & principles has, it seems to me, been too much transferred to the individuals who call themselves Unitarians; he is loth to see wrong in them, and is unwilling to dissociate himself from them. This feeling may be good within certain limits — but cannot safely be trusted long. We may do both ourselves, & the truth, great harm, by undertaking the defence of the wrong-doing of our "friends". Why should the fear of what he calls a "*family-quarrel*" deter him or any one, in this case? Have we any business to consider Unitarians as our especial family, more than those of our fellow-men who are in suffering, in degradation, and in slavery? Shall we refrain one testimony in behalf of their rights, because it will wound some member of our "family," who perhaps is a little mixed up with that very suffering, degradation & slavery? If we love even father or mother more than the Truth & the Right, where have we put ourselves? I do think your brother R. is overmuch attached to the denomination, as such, *and to his ministerial brethren as a class*, and that he does not see their acts, as he does those of other men. Does this seem a hard saying? I know, by my own experience, what this feeling is. I was a "birth-right" Unitarian — grew up to think their ministers faultless men, almost; — honest & fearless seekers for the truth and the right. I was for many years their fellow-laborer, admirer, & defender; — and devoted to the Unitarian cause. My eyes opened very slowly to the defection and decline of the early Unitarian spirit. Many a dea ~~[illegible]~~ preceded me, in their witness against the bigotry, narrowness, & worldliness which crept into & subjected the Unitarian body — till no in its organized movement at least, it has become what I have alrea expressed. It was with a great price — at a great sacrifice of feeling ease, & social consideration (I may say this to you, which I would not wish to dwell upon at all) — that I purchased my freedom from those chains of sectarianism; which I would not re-assume this hour, if the whole world's wealth were the bribe to do so. I look now upon those chai with something like loathing. — I do hope that the time is at hand when the truth will purge the vision of us all, and enable us both to speak and to do whatever is in accordance with the commandment "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

MS. B.1.6 v.4, p.30

I have not failed to attend to the matter of your little Note about the Poems. I ~~sent~~ took it to Crosby & Nichols; after some days, I called on them and inquired their decision. Mr. C. said that the publication of poetry was attended with great risk. He had not published much, but that which he had, met with a ve slow sale. Mrs. Follen's poems he spoke of — published long since — not yet disposed of. He said to he had a work now in hand — the re-publication of a voluminous work of James Martineau's, wh absorbed his spare funds. — I then went to James Munroe & Co. — Unitarians, & liberal men, of more pecuniary ability than C. & N. Mr. M. thanked me for the offer — but said their experience in printing Collections of Poetry had been such, that they now did not attempt it at all, save where the author paid all the expenses, & incurred all the risk, of the undertaking. Such works are quite numerous here, and the authors sometimes able & willing to lose a sum, for the satisfaction of publication, &c. &c. But, sai Mr. Munroe, unless in the case of Longfellow, or some one of his standing, no ~~work~~ book of poe will sell at all with us now. — This seemed to be putting a bar to my further proceeding I should be happy to aid your design, if I could. — Referring to my letter to Mr. Estlin for further American matters, and with sincere & respectful regards, I am, Yours truly

Samuel May Jr.